

BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – July 26, 2011

- **Ken Hartman, Director of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, presided over the BRAC Implementation Committee meeting in John Carman's absence. He called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.**
- **Phil Alperson, the County's BRAC Coordinator, provided the following updates:**
 - Phil reminded the Committee of the schedule change for the August Committee meeting. The meeting will be held at the BCC Services Center one week later than usual, on August 23 rather than August 16.
 - **THE BRAC MOBILITY PROJECTS MATRIX IS POSTED ON THE BRAC WEB SITE.** It has been updated through June 14, 2011 and reflects the multi-modal approach the County, State and other stakeholders are taking to address the transportation impacts of BRAC in Bethesda – transit improvements, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, intersection upgrades, transportation demand management, etc.
 - http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/transpo_project_matrix-051711.pdf
 - **THE “TIERS AND PHASES” OF BRAC PROJECTS** based on funding is also posted on the web site. The Tiers and Phases were developed by MDOT and MCDOT in November 2009 with input from the BIC.
 - **Matrix developed by MDOT-MCDOT, October 2009:**
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/bracprojects-tiers-100609.pdf>
 - **Summary of Tiers & Phases, updated February 4, 2011:**
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/tiersphases-summary-revised-020411.pdf>
 - **FEDERAL FUNDING UPDATE:** On July 21, the Office of Economic Adjustment published criteria in the Federal Register for the disposition of the \$300 million fund appropriated by Congress earlier this year for transportation infrastructure projects in communities with BRAC-impacted military medical facilities. MCDOT and MDOT are working together to derive a strategy to submit the strongest possible proposals to receive funding for essential projects affecting Bethesda. MDOT provided the following schedule of benchmarks and opportunities for BIC members to participate in the comment process:
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/bic-oea_fundingschedule-072611.pdf

Considering the OEA August 19 deadline to submit public comments on the grant criteria, the BIC established an internal deadline of August 5 to submit comments to Phil for consideration by the County Executive's office. Of course, anyone from the public may submit their own comments to OEA.

- **7-21-11 Gazette.Net: Guidelines released for \$300 million for BRAC transportation projects -- County coordinator: We're in a good position to receive funds**
<http://www.gazette.net/article/20110721/NEWS/707219810&template=gazette>
- **7-21-11 Federal Register: Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), U.S. Department of Defense**
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-07-21/pdf/2011-18400.pdf>
- **OEA Funding Schedule and Opportunities for Community Input:**
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/bic-oea_transpofunding-timeline-072611.pdf
- **DEFENSE ACCESS ROAD (DAR) FUNDING UPDATE:** At last month's meeting, Captain Malanoski alluded to potential additional DAR funding for the Metro Crossing project. Indeed, the next day Phil was informed that DoD had notified Congress of its intent to reprogram an additional \$8 million for DAR funding. Commander Lamberton of NSAB confirmed that the funds have been reprogrammed without objection from Congress.
- **CONSTRUCTION UPDATES:**
 - **Consolidated Project Timeline for BRAC-related construction delays, as of June 16, 2011:**
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/disruptions-timeline-041111.pdf>
 - Edgar Gonzalez announced that the Cedar Lane Bridge will reopen August 5, three weeks ahead of schedule. There was much discussion about the disruptions caused by the closure, and there were complaints of insufficient contingency planning by transportation agencies.
 - MCDOT project updates through July 15, 2011:
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/mcdot-projectsupdate-071511.pdf>
 - SHA has completed its work on the Old Georgetown Road resurfacing project and will commence resurfacing of Wisconsin

Avenue between the DC line and Bradley Boulevard in Chevy Chase. Further discussion of the SHA Intersections Improvement project appears below. The matter of the traffic signal at MD 355/North Wood is also discussed below.

- The web site has numerous articles on the impending closure of WRAMC and relocation to Bethesda. Topics include closing ceremonies, construction updates, and traffic issues.
- **WEB SITE UPDATES:** The revamped web site is up! It is still under construction, so Phil cautioned for patience. He welcomes comments on how the new site works and might be improved. Greater emphasis has been placed on providing information the current status of transportation projects, and Information on commuting alternatives is readily available.
- **STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION UPDATE ON THE INTERSECTIONS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT:**
 - Barb Solberg and Christina Minkler of SHA provided an update on the project, and an accelerated schedule of phasing based on the potential availability of OEA funds. Related topics included (and details below):
 - Discussion about future disruptions at Cedar Lane; SHA hopes to do culvert relocation which would require another closure in the summer of 2013 – this would be the optimum closure for Stone Ridge School but SHA acknowledged that other factors and a very tight schedule make this target date challenging.
 - The status of the traffic signal at Rockville Pike/North Wood Gate. SHA reported that the signal will become operational on August 4 and will be subject to a rigorous evaluation process by State, County, Navy and NIH.
 - Whether BRT could be added. Edgar noted there is no funding or timeframe for BRT to be constructed in the County.
 - Possible undergrounding of utilities.
 - **7-26-11 Revised intersections project schedule based on potential availability of OEA grant fund:**
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/mcdot-sha_intersectionsschedule-oea_fundingupdate-072611.pdf
 - **12-21-10 SHA Construction Schedule for “Phase One” Intersection Improvements, prior to potential availability of OEA BRAC funding:**
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/inte-rsections-sha-tieroneschedule-122110.pdf>

- **SHA plan to monitor new Rockville Pike traffic signal at North Wood Drive:**

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/northwoods_signal-sha_monitoringplan-072611.pdf

- **SHA chart of northbound travel times between Wilson/North Wood and Cedar Lane:**

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/northwoods_signal-sha_traveltimes-072611.pdf

- The following article was published in BethesdaPatch.com on July 27 and provides a detailed summary of the SHA presentation on the Intersections Improvement Project, including an update on the traffic signal at MD 355/North Wood. The full text is reprinted below:

<http://chevy Chase.patch.com/articles/brac-intersection-improvements-on-schedule>

July 27, 2001

BRAC Intersection Improvements On Schedule --
Utility relocation work set to begin in coming months.

By Erin Donaghue, BethesdaPatch.com

Utility relocation work will soon begin on Bethesda and Chevy Chase intersection improvement projects geared to ease BRAC traffic congestion, Maryland State Highway Administration officials said Tuesday evening.

The intersection improvements are part of a series of transportation projects planned near the soon-to-be Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, which will officially open Sept. 15 after a portion of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center merges with Bethesda's National Naval Medical Center. The new facility will bring with it 2,500 more employees, nearly double the amount of yearly visitors, and a host of traffic concerns.

The move is part of the federally mandated Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

Some of the planned transportation projects are dependant on federal funds -- \$300 million has been set aside for communities with BRAC-impacted military medical facilities. County leaders will soon begin the process of applying for the funds, but it's still unclear how much Bethesda will receive.

At the meeting, state transportation officials updated the BRAC Implementation Committee -- a group of stakeholders tasked with reviewing BRAC-related transportation

projects -- on the intersection projects and a controversial new traffic light along Rockville Pike, which will begin operation Thursday.

County transportation officials also updated the group on the project that's closed Cedar Lane Bridge for much of the summer.

The Intersections

Transportation projects are "tiered" depending on whether funding sources have been identified for them.

Four intersections around the soon-to-be Walter Reed National Military Medical Center are planned for improvements, but only three of those—Connecticut Avenue and Jones Bridge Road, Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane, and Rockville Pike and Jones Bridge Road -- are partially funded. Since portions of those projects are funded, they're known as "Tier 1."

A fourth project, at Old Georgetown Road and Cedar Lane, isn't yet funded.

Tuesday, Barb Solberg of SHA told the group that the timeline for the Tier One project remains on track. Utility relocation work is expected to begin in August or September for the Connecticut Avenue and Jones Bridge Road project, and in October for the Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane project.

The Rockville Pike and Jones Bridge Road project includes installing signals to dedicate an extra southbound left-hand turn lane from Rockville Pike onto Jones Bridge Road in the afternoon peak hours. Without need to acquire right-of-way or relocate utilities, that project will jump into the final phase of construction in October and wrap up by June of 2012, according to the timetable.

With the anticipation of federal funds, unfunded portions of two of the projects will move forward, Solberg said, including road widening along Cedar Lane and Connecticut Avenue.

"There is some risk to us because those aren't funded right now," Solberg said.

The Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane project will need to stick to a strict construction timetable in order to stay on track for the closure of a portion of Cedar Lane in the summer of 2013 in order to build a culvert along the road, SHA officials said.

Cedar Lane Bridge

Edgar Gonzalez, of Montgomery County's Department of Transportation, told the group that the Cedar Lane bridge is expected to re-open August 5 – several weeks ahead of schedule.

The bridge has been closed to traffic since June as crews work to replace it where Cedar Lane crosses Rock Creek. The project will also add a bikeway/pedestrian path. The bridge was classified as “structurally deficient” in 2007 and was posted for load restrictions, according to Montgomery County, and a 2008 inspection also revealed that concrete beams and piers were in poor condition.

During the closure, residents in nearby neighborhoods have complained of cut-through traffic from commuters seeking to find a way around the closed bridge.

Tuesday, residents said the headaches caused by the closure were “just the tip of the iceberg” as BRAC nears, and encouraged transportation officials to learn from the project when implementing the 2013 Cedar Lane closure.

Rockville Pike Traffic Light

Thursday will mean lights on for the new traffic light that’s been recently installed in front of Navy Med at Rockville Pike and North Wood Drive, state transportation officials said.

The light, which is intended to ease access for those entering and exiting the Naval hospital, has gotten some heat from residents who worry another light along the crowded corridor will further back up traffic.

The signal won’t impede traffic on southbound Rockville Pike, but it will stop northbound traffic with a red light to allow those coming south on the pike to make a lefthand turn into the Naval hospital. It will also allow those leaving the hospital to make a righthand turn onto the pike, though drivers leaving the hospital will not be allowed to make a lefthand turn into the southbound lanes.

Tuesday, more details emerged about the light, including the timing of the signal. Beginning this week, the light will operate from 5:30-7:30a.m., allowing a 50-second green time for those entering and exiting Navy Med.

In the afternoon, officials are looking at operating the light between 2p.m. and 4:30p.m. with a 45-second green time.

SHA has said they will carefully study traffic patterns before and after the traffic signal is installed to determine whether it will remain permanently.

For a full list of all the BRAC transportation improvement projects, check out the county’s newly re-designed BRAC website.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 23, 2011 (rather than August 16), 7:30 p.m., at the BCC Regional Services Center.**

Committee members in attendance, July 26, 2011:

Phil Alperson, County BRAC Coordinator
Dawn Chaikin and Richard Levine, Locust Hill Citizens Association
Larry Cole, Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
Dave Dabney, Bethesda Urban Partnership
Edgar Gonzalez, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Kevin Krause for Ilaya Hopkins, East Bethesda Citizens Association
Ed Krauze, Bethesda Parkview Citizens Association
Ginanne Italiano, Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
Janet Maalouf, Maplewood Citizens Association
Debbie Michaels, Glenbrook Village Homeowners Association
Sara Morningstar, Montgomery County Office of Intergovernmental Relations
Patrick O'Neill, Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
Andy Scott, Maryland Dept. of Transportation
Richard Vogel, Stone Ridge School
Phil Neuberg for Dan Wheeland, National Institutes of Health

Ex-officio:

Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)
Alex Wong for Joan Kleinman (Representative Chris Van Hollen)
Debbie Spielberg (Council Member Marc Elrich)
Commander John Lamberton, Naval Support Activity-Bethesda
Jeff Miller, Naval Support Activity-Bethesda

Other Attendees

Nancy Abeles, Bethesda Crest
Brigitte Akalovsky, North Chevy Chase
Michelle Basch, WTOP Radio
Kristen Blackmon, Bethesda Urban Partnership
Sandy Dean, NNMC
Heather Dinopolsky, Linowes & Blocher
Erin Donahue, Bethesda Patch
Sarah Gantz, Gazette Newspapers
Ben Giles, Washington Examiner
Mary Alice & Bob Gray, East Bethesda
Russ Hamill, Montgomery County Police Dept.
Levi Helling (sp?)
Patricia Hilling
Richard Hoyer
Greg Humes, Chevy Chase Valley Citizens Association
Norman Kamerer (sp?), The Promenade
Nancy Koran
Karen Kuker-Kihl, The Promenade
Marilyn Mazuzan, Town of Oakmont

Avice Meehan, Howard Hughes Medical Institute
Christina Minkler, State Highway Administration
Tom Robertson, Bethesda Urban Partnership
Paul Seder
Matt Snare, State Highway Administration
Barb Solberg, State Highway Administration
Ken Strickland, Chevy Chase Valley Citizens Association
Commandeer Burr Vogel, NSA Bethesda
Robert Weesner, North Chevy Chase